Ornithological Notes from the Raffles Museum, 1–4[1]

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No. 1. New Records for Singapore Island.

The following four new records for Singapore Island, and in two cases for the Malay Peninsula, are established by specimens taken in 1940 and 1941. The course of the war prevented their formal identification and the issue of the subsequent report at an earlier date.

In three instances the specimens are from a selection sent to the Raffles Museum by Dr. B. D. Molesworth. Dr. Molesworth is an experienced ornithologist and was only submitting material which he thought likely to be of interest. It is worth noting that his total collection, consisting of less than fifty skins, includes several unusual records in addition to the three new ones. Among these are an Eastern Moorhen, *Gallinula chloropus orientalis* Horsf., a Purple Heron, *Ardea purpurea manillensis* Meyen, a Pond Heron, *Ardeola ralloides bacchus* (Bp.) and a Cotton Teal, *Nettapus c. coromandelianus* (Gmel.), all of which are believed to be rare or scarce in the southern part of the Malay Peninsula. The collection also includes two specimens of the more unusual western race of the Redshank, *Tringa t. totanus* (Linn.) and an immature Pied Harrier, *Circus melanoleucus* (Penn.). Finally there is a mature female Watercock, *Gallicrex cinerea* (Gmel.), taken at the beginning of August, which constitutes the first definite record of this bird in the southern section of the Malay Peninsula between the end of May and November: and two male Rednecked Stints, *Erolia ruficollis* (Pall.), taken as late as May 18; both have the foreneck and upper breast largely red, and a fair amount of chestnut on the upper surface.

Capella megala (Swinh.).

Swinhoe's Snipe.

A male in fresh plumage, and two further examples which were not kept for examination, were taken by Dr. B. D. Molesworth in April, 1941. This species breeds in Eastern Siberia, Mongolia and Sakhalin, and passes through China and Japan to winter in the Malay Archipelago. During the latter period it occurs from the Pelew and Marianne Islands, in the east, to New Guinea and north-west Australia in the south, and the Shan States, Burma, Assam and the Madras Presidency in the west. Robinson and Chasen (1936, p. 171) describe it as known in the Malay Peninsula only from the vicinity of Taiping and Kuala Lumpur, but probably occurring in small numbers wherever snipe are found. The Raffles Museum collection contains one specimen from the former locality and eight, mostly taken by E. Seimund, from the latter.

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[1] Nos. 1 & 2 prepared and submitted May 1947. No. 3 prepared and submitted December 1947. No. 4 prepared December 1947, submitted February 1948.

Calidris canutus canutus (Linn.).

The Knot.

A solitary female was shot by Dr. B. D. Molesworth on a tidal estuary in Singapore on 23 November, 1940. It is changing from immature to winter plumage. The Knot breeds in Arctic Asia, and moves south in the autumn to Africa, Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Indo-China, Java and Australia. The previous Malaysian records are from Banka Island, the North Natuna Islands and Java (Chasen, 1935, p. 39), and this is therefore the first record of its occurrence in the Malay Peninsula. The only other specimens in the Raffles Museum collection are from Meklong, in central Siam; all were taken in March and April, during the return migration.

Chlidonias leucoptera grisea (Horsf.).

The Eastern White-winged Black Tern.

A first winter female was taken by F. N. Chasen on 6 December, 1941. This bird occasionally appears in some numbers off Penang, and it has also been recorded on the Perak and Selangor coasts in April and May, but it had not previously been met with on the Malay Peninsula south of Malacca (Robinson and Chasen, 1936, pp. 91–93). It breeds on the Amur, in Siberia, moving south in winter through China to Burma and occasionally Ceylon and the Andamans, and through the Philippines to Celebes, Borneo, Java and Australia. It has also been taken on the east coast of Sumatra. The specimens already in the Raffles Museum collection are from Penang Island (twenty-four), Pasir Panjang, Perak (two) and the Dindings (one).

Egretta eulophotes (Swinh.).

The Chinese Egret.

Two adults were seen by Dr. B. D. Molesworth on the mud-flats of a tidal swamp at Seletar air base, in September or October, 1940. One was collected, and subsequently identified by F. N. Chasen: the specimen cannot now be traced, but the record is acceptable. The normal range of this species is central and southern China, south to Formosa and Celebes. Chasen

(1935, p. 56) quotes specimens from Peninsular Siam, the Mentawi Islands (West Sumatra), Borneo and Christmas Island, but though a likely stray it does not appear to have been recorded previously from the Malay Peninsula. The Raffles Museum collection contains one specimen from Sipora in the Mentawi group, and two from the North Natuna Islands.

References.

CHASEN (1935)—Chasen, F. N., A Handlist of Malaysian Birds, Bull. Raff. Mus., No. 11.

ROBINSON and CHASEN (1936)—Robinson, H. C., and Chasen, F. N., The Birds of the Malay Peninsula, Vol. 3, Witherby, London.

No. 2. An Immature Redtailed Bo'sun-bird.

An immature Redtailed Bo'sun-bird, *Phaëthon rubricauda* subsp., was collected at sea by Mr. F. G. H. Allen between the northern point of Sumatra and the Nicobar Islands, on 20 March, 1947, while on a passage between Colombo and Penang. The specimen, which has been given to the Raffles Museum, presents two points of interest which are discussed below. Its measurements, in the flesh, were total length 605 mm., wing flat 335 mm., tail from the base of the longest feather 206 mm., head and body 385 mm., exposed culmen 69.5 mm., gape 96 mm., and tarsus 28 mm.

The bird was an immature male, with testes about 5 mm. long. The stomach contained only two cephalopod beaks, each about 6 mm. long, several lenses from fish eyes, 2–3 mm. in diameter, and a number of vertebrae and fin rays, 25–30 mm. long, from a bony fish. The latter could not be identified further. They were, however, similar, in general appearance to certain of the remains found in the *Phaëthon* stomachs on Christmas and the Cocos-Keeling Islands, where the birds are known to feed largely on cephalopods, and flying fish of the genus *Cypsilurus*.

Plumage.

Normally the young bo'sun-bird makes its way out to sea after leaving its nest, while still in its first juvenile plumage, and is not seen again in the vicinity of land until it returns, fully mature, to breed. Accordingly one cannot determine the sequence of colouring between the earliest and last plumages from the material available in the immediate neighbourhood of the nesting grounds. This specimen, however, shows definitely that there is at least one intermediate stage. It is just completing a major moult, and the new plumage, though largely satiny white, has certain black markings not present in a fully mature bird. The tail is also intermediate in form, length and colouring between the juvenile and the adult. From the analogy of the majority of the other Pelecaniiformes one would expect two or three stages: if that is so, then this is most likely to represent the last of these, the stage immediately preceding the full adult plumage.

This bird is a pure, satiny white, with no trace of a pinkish blush. It has the following black markings in addition to the black crescent across the eye, which appears to be present, unchanged, throughout life. There is a little fine black mottling on the back of the head, the nape and the area of the upper ear coverts, formed mostly by dark centres to the feathers. There is also some fine spotting across the shoulders, formed by occasional, small, single or paired, subterminal black eye-spots. The feathers of the centre of the back and rump have one, two or three transverse bars, as in the juvenile plumage. These latter feathers, and some of those on the nape, are worn and frayed, and the dark colouring has faded to a blackish brown. They undoubtedly belong to the old plumage that is being discarded, and it would seem that in the new the black of the head and body will be restricted to a few, small but clearly visible, subterminal black spots. The median wing coverts also include a number of old, faded, barred feathers, and some fresh ones with subterminal eye-spots, both paired and single.

The scapulars have black shafts and in some cases a narrow black strip along part of the adjacent web. The elongated feathers of the lower flank have hoary grey centres and blackish shafts. The inner six secondaries have long, black centres, reaching their maximum in the third and fourth from the body, and then decreasing again. The secondaries distal to them have gradually decreasing black areas on their shafts. The primaries and primary coverts have black shafts on the upper surface, with the colouring stopping just short of the distal end of the feather. All these feathers are new.

The rectrices and upper tail coverts have black shafts, again stopping short of the end of the feather, and the two median coverts an irregular black triangle on their inner webs. The longer of the centre tail feathers is narrow for about the last 95 mm. of its 206 mm. length: it has a conspicuous black shaft, and the web of the narrow portion is a faded yellowish pink: the feather terminates normally, and though it is frayed it has not been broken short by wear. The second feather is only about 94 mm. long, with its basal 19 mm. still in its sheath: the portion showing is narrow, with the web a rich, light, apricot orange, appreciably stronger in tone than on the old feather, but much lighter than the full blood red of the normal adult.

The irides, tarsi and feet are rather similar in fully developed juveniles and mature birds (iris, dark brown: tarsus, medial digit and proximal third of the outer three digits, pale blue grey or bluish pink, with the remainder of the outer digits and the claws, black), and this specimen conforms to the general pattern. The bill is blackish horn distally, dropping to yellowish horn at the base, with a suggestion of reddish brown on the body of the upper mandible. This is rather nearer to the juvenile colouring, as recorded on Christmas Island (bill black, with the base and a line along the lower border of the mandible pale bluish or greenish grey), than to the adult.

Briefly, the plumage that is being acquired differs from that of a normal adult in the fine, occasional spotting on the upper parts, the more prominent black on the shafts of the scapulars, and the colouring of the webs of the elongated tail feathers. Only one of the apparently mature birds in the Raffles Museum collections shows any overt black on the back, and then it is confined to a few scattered spots on the rump. The bill is still rather nearer to the juvenile colouring than to the adult. The feathers of the discarded plumage remaining on the back and rump differ from those in a twelve-week old bird only in being worn and faded.

Subspecific Status and Point of Origin.

The subspecific status and point of origin of this bird are also of considerable interest. Only two breeding areas are at present known for *Phaëthon rubricauda* in the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas. These may be grouped as (*a*) Mauritius, and (*b*) Christmas Island, the Cocos-Keeling Islands, Gunong Api in the Banda Sea and islands off the west coast of Australia.

The typical race, *P. r. rubricauda* Boddaert, occurs in the western portion of the Indian Ocean. It breeds on Round Island, off Mauritius. In 1912 Mathews separated *P. r. westralis* (1912, p. 88), giving as its range West Australia and Christmas Island.

Mathews originally designated *westralis* on its longer wing. Later he added rosier coloration and smaller bill to its subspecific characters. Chasen (1933, p. 77), examining six examples taken on Christmas Island in 1932, found that the smaller bill is the only distinguishing feature in the Christmas Island birds. In 1939 and 1940 I took a further eight specimens on the island which confirm this point. Mathews gives a length of 76–80 mm. for the exposed culmen in the typical *rubricauda:* the fourteen adults from Christmas Island have a range of 58–65 mm. On the other hand Mathews gives 320–336 mm. for the wing length of *rubricauda,* and the Christmas Island series runs from 316–349 mm.[1] Rosier coloration is definitely an unsatisfactory character. It varies considerably in the field, some sitting birds appearing almost white and others having a very lovely, glowing, rose pink flush. It also shows a seasonal variation, being strongest at the beginning of the breeding period. Finally collected skins fade rapidly, and some of mine taken in 1939 were appreciably paler when I re-examined them in the Raffles Museum in 1941.

In addition to these adults I also measured six nestlings during my stay on Christmas Island. Two of these were killed when judged to be about to leave their nests, and the other four recorded to within five days of their disappearance. The range for the exposed culmen in the series of six is 58–63 mm. From all these measurements it can, I think, be taken that the Christmas Island *westralis* have a culmen of less than 65 mm., and that in *Phaëthon rubricauda* the bill is within 1 or 2 mm. of its final measurements when the chick leaves its nest.

P. r. westralis is also said to breed on the Cocos-Keeling Islands. There is no doubt that it does so, but it is relatively rare on the atoll and is not the regular species occurring there. I have only seen two specimens from the islands, a pair which I took at a nest in September, 1941. Their wing measurements are 324 mm. (♀) and 347 mm. (♂), and their culmens 62 mm. and 65 mm. respectively. They are thus within the range of the Christmas Island birds, which they resemble in every other respect; they are certainly of the same race, if not actually strays from that island.

Christmas Island and the Cocos-Keeling Islands are nearly 1,200 miles from the point where the specimen under discussion was found: Mauritius is about 3,000 miles away. Both distances are considerable, even for a tropic bird, and the length of its bill, with an exposed culmen of 69.5 mm., makes it too large for the former race and too small for the latter. Nor would it appear to be the first specimen seen in this neighbourhood. According to Chasen (1933, p. 78) *P. rubricauda* occurs in the Bay of Bengal. It is also included by Vorderman in his list of Sumatran birds, though the record was not accepted by Chasen in his Handlist of Malaysian Birds (1936, p. 67). Finally Stewart Baker (1929,

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[1] Hoogerwerf found *Phaëthon rubricauda* breeding on Gunong Api, in the Banda Sea, when he visited the island in July and August, 1938. He collected three nestlings, two juvenile birds and three adults (2 ♂, 1 ♀). The latter had exposed culmens of 55–61 mm., while the wings ranged from 310–334 mm. In commenting on these specimens van Bemmel writes,

> "Chasen .... points to the fact that wing length is not a suitable feature to distinguish *Ph. rubricauda westralis* from the typical form. The bills of the Gg. Api birds, however, are very short and therefore belong to the subspecies *westralis*, whose short bill is the most typical mark of identification". (van Bemmel and Hoogerwerf, 1940, p. 452).

p. 292) includes it in the fauna of British India and, without referring to particular specimens, gives the culmen length as 66–69 mm. It is therefore possible that there is a so far unrecorded breeding ground somewhere in this area, either off the coast of Sumatra or in the Nicobars, of which this is the first example to reach us. It such a colony exists it would be quite natural for its birds to be intermediate in character between the typical race to the west and *westralis* to the south-east.

References.

BAKER (1929)—Baker, E. C. Stuart, The Fauna of British India, Birds, Vol. 6.

CHASEN (1933)—Chasen, F. N., Notes on the Birds of Christmas Island, Indian Ocean. (Bull. Raff. Mus., No. 8, pp. 55–87).

CHASEN (1935)—Chasen, F. N., Handlist of Malaysian Birds. (*Ibid*, No. 11).

MATHEWS (1912)—Mathews, G. M., Austral Avian Record, Vol. 1.

VAN BEMMEL and HOOGERWERF (1940)—van Bemmel, A. C. V., and Hoogerwerf, A., The Birds of Goenoeng Api (Treubia, No. 17).

No. 3. An immature Blyth's Hawk Eagle, taken in Johore.

An immature female of Blyth's Hawk Eagle, *Spizaëtus nipalensis alboniger* Blyth, which was taken alive in open country near Kluang, in Johore, on 14 November, 1947, was later sent down to the Raffles Museum by Mr. D. B. Owen. It is in full feathering, with no indications of a moult. It agrees closely with the description given by Swann (1933, p. 113) of the first (juvenile) plumage, except that there are no white tips to the feathers of the nuchal crest, and the throat, breast and belly are buffy rufous rather than pale fawn, but lacking the blackish stripes of his second (first immature) plumage. In this respect it agrees in general with three other skins in the Raffles Museum collection.

Prior to this acquisition the Raffles Museum reference collection contained four specimens of this bird, of which only one was said to have been taken in Malaya. The series now runs,

Locality	*Taken*	*Collector*	*Sex*	*Total length*	*Wing flat*	*Culmen to Cere*
Kinu, Mt. Kinabalu, Borneo	3.4.29	F. N. Chasen	ad. ♀	565	351	29.5
Pulau Siantan, Anamba Islands	22.9.25	F. N. Chasen	imm. ♂	555	328	29
Kuching, Sarawak	15.8.00	not known	imm. ♀	540	306	24.5
Singapore Island	4.2.36	bought in the flesh	imm. ♀	570	358	31
Nr. Kluang, Johore	14.11.47	D. B. Owen	imm. ♀	545	311	23.5

Stresemann (1924, p. 431) separates the Javanese birds from the remainder, giving as characters greater size, and, in the adult, chest chiefly black and the median tail band browner. If his race is valid the immature bird purchased in Singapore in 1936 would seem to belong to it, and not to the Malayan race. Its wing measurement, 358 mm., is the same as that quoted by Stresemann for his type specimen. Swann (1933, p. 114) includes birds from Borneo with Stresemann's Javanese race. The limited number of specimens available here do not support this arrangement. The immature bird from Kuching is the smallest of the series, and the adult female from Mount Kinabalu, though a fairly large bird, has the chest heavily streaked with white.

Finally, it is interesting to note that although this bird is widely distributed, though nowhere plentiful, throughout at least the greater part of the forest country of the Malay Peninsula (Robinson, 1928, p. 31: Chasen, 1939, p. 37: Edgar, 1947)[1] the Raffles Museum reference collection contains no adults from this country among its approximately 29,000 skins, and previously had only one immature bird, which may possibly have come from Java.

References

CHASEN, F. N. (1939)—*Birds of the Malay Peninsula*, Vol. 4.

EDGAR, A. T. (1947)—*In litt.*, 12.12.1947.

ROBINSON, H. C. (1928)—*Birds of the Malay Peninsula*, Vol. 2.

STRESEMANN, Dr. E. (1924)—*Journ. für Orn.*, No. 72.

SWANN, H. K. (1933)—*A Monograph of the Birds of Prey (Order Accipitres)*, pt. 11, (edited by Alexander Wetmore).

No. 4. A Note on the Distribution of the Immigrant Snipe of the genus "Capella" wintering in the Malay Peninsula and Surrounding Areas.

In a short note in a recent number of the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society (Vol. 46, 1947, pp. 730–731) Mr. J. E. KEMPE discusses the relative numbers of Swinhoe's Snipe, *Capella megala* (Swinhoe), the Pintail Snipe, *Capella*

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[1] Robinson describes it as perhaps the most frequently seen of all the raptorial birds in the mountains and at nearly all the hill stations. This is supported by Edgar, who records it from Cameron's Highlands, Fraser's Hill and the Gap. On one occasion, in 1937, the latter watched a concourse of about forty of these birds circling over a summit near the Green Cow at Cameron's Highlands (altitude over 5,000 feet), for about an hour.

stenura (Bp.) and the Fantail Snipe, *Capella gallinago* (Linn.), visiting Malaya and Borneo during the autumn and winter months. Information available here, together with data kindly supplied by Dr. A. C. V. VAN BEMMEL of Buitenzorg, make it possible to expand his account on several points.

Mr. Kempe's records were based on snipe shot on both sides of the Malay Peninsula. He first began examining his bag carefully on 6 February, 1922, and, with an interval of two seasons during which he shot very few birds, continued his inspections up to and including 1936. The largest bag was 206 in the 1928–29 season. Over the whole period he examined 1,360 snipe, of which 1,350 were Pintail, 5 Fantail, and 5 Swinhoe's. This gives an average of one of each of the two rarer species to 270 Pintail Snipe.

At suitable times two of these birds, the Fantail and the Pintail, are widely spread and plentiful over the greater part of India. To a large extent they occur together, in open marshes and rice-fields, but, as Stuart Baker (1929, p. 264) points out, the Pintail "with its much harder, less sensitive, bill often frequents dry grass-land, thin bush-jungle and other places which no Fantail would ever enter". Delacour and Jabouille (1931, p. 166) write of the Pintail, "Elle préfère aux terrains inondes et découverts les espaces couverts d'herbes ou de brousse, qu'ils soient humides ou non". Capt. Kelham, whose notes on snipe shooting in Province Wellesley are still the best written account for the Malay Peninsula, also says of the Pintail,

> "Their favourite ground is where the jungle has been burned, and the vegetation, just beginning to spring up, shows in green shoots above the blackened soil. Another sure finding place is rough land, with bushes, small pools of water, and moist places scattered here and there....." (Kelham, 1883, p. 182).

In general this is the kind of country most frequently shot over in both the Malay Peninsula and Borneo. That it is typical Pintail country should be born in mind when considering the very low figures for the two rarer species.

A second point is, of course, the difficulty of distinguishing the three species, even, in the hand. It is highly probable that a proportion of the rarer birds taken in any locality are overlooked, because it is assumed that the bag will consist only of the common species. There are several small differences in the plumage, but the simplest and surest method is to examine the tail feathers. The Fantail has twelve to eighteen, usually fourteen, broad feathers; Swinhoe's about twenty feathers, of which the middle eight are broad and the remainder much narrower; and the Pintail about twenty-six feathers, of which the middle ten are broad and the remainder true pin-feathers, stiff, narrow and almost wire-like. Unfortunately young birds of the year may lack full sets of feathers, and without considerable experience it is sometimes difficult to be sure of the status of a moulting bird.

Most experienced observers note possible field distinctions, which should also be born in mind. Swinhoe's Snipe is usually bulkier than the other two species, and rather heavier in the air. Seimund (quoted Chasen, 1936, p. 171) describes it as slower and less active in flight. Dr. Molesworth (*in litt.*) writes "You can—once your eye is in—tell them by the way they rise, and they seem slower on the wing, and less 'ginky'." Banks (1935, p. 291) again says they "usually rise slowly and fly sufficiently slovenly to be distinguished before being shot". The Fantail, on the other hand, is even quicker in the air than the Pintail, which itself, "not so wild nor so active on the wing" as Kelham describes it, sometimes proves disappointing to anyone with long experience of the European bird.

Capella megala (Swinhoe). Swinhoe's Snipe.

It seems to be generally accepted in the Malay Peninsula south of the Siamese frontier that Swinhoe's Snipe is liable to turn up anywhere where the Pintail occurs, but in very much smaller numbers. Mr. Kempe's figure of one Swinhoe's to 270 Pintail is well supported by other observers. Mr. A. T. Edgar, whose shooting was largely confined to Sitiawan in Perak and the Dindings on the adjacent coast, tells me that between 1924 and 1936 he examined upwards of 1,000 tails a year. On the average during this period he saw about one Swinhoe's Snipe for every 250 Pintail that came into his bag (Edgar, *in litt.*). Dr. B. D. Molesworth, who was shooting on Singapore Island and in southern Johore in 1940 and the first half of 1941, took about 150 birds including two examples of Swinhoe's Snipe: in 1946–47 at Sungei Buloh, in Selangor, he examined about 400 birds, all of which proved to be Pintails: his average is therefore one Swinhoe's Snipe to about 275 Pintails (Molesworth, *in litt.*).

The late E. Seimund, who was taxidermist at the Selangor Museum for nearly thirty years, is said to have shot a number of examples of this species, mostly in the neighbourhood of Kuala Lumpur, but unfortunately his game books have disappeared, and we have no record of his respective totals. The Raffles Museum reference collection contains the following ten specimens, the majority of which were taken by Seimund. The dates range from 1 October (Seimund) to April (Molesworth).

Date taken	Locality	Collector	Sex
1.10.10	Matang, Perak	E. Seimund	♂
15.10.18	Pudu, near K.L.	E. Seimund	♂
1.11.21	Pudu, near K.L.	F. N. Chasen	—
12.11.16	Ampang, near K.L.	E. Seimund	♀
17.11.16	Ampang, near K.L.	E. Seimund	♀
27.11.17	Sungei Besi, nr. K.L.	E. Seimund	♀
12.12.09	Ampang, near K.L.	R. Charters[1]	♀
13.1.21	Pudu, near K.L.	E. Seimund	♂
23.3.19	Ampang, near K.L.	E. Seimund	♀
April, '41	Singapore Island	B. D. Molesworth	♂

The status of Swinhoe's Snipe in the Siamese portion of the Malay Peninsula is uncertain. I can trace no records of it from this area, Siam proper or Indo-China, though it probably occurs in very small numbers, much as it does further south. Smythies (1940, p. 439) gives only a few records for Burma: two or three from the Myitkyina district in the north-east, and an uncertain one from Tharrawaddy. It would seem to be rather more plentiful in Assam, Eastern India and Madras (Stuart Baker, 1929, p. 265), though Mr. R. J. Clough (1940, p. 442) saw only one in a total of 16,600 birds shot mostly within a radius of 40 miles of Calcutta, between 1926–27 and 1939–40. There is at present only one record from Sumatra, and nine from Java (three confirmed by specimens in the Buitenzorg collection, and a further six in literature—A.C.V. van Bemmel, *in litt.*).

This bird seems to be more plentiful in parts of Borneo. Moulton (1914, p. 138) failed to find it in Sarawak. Mr. E. Banks (1935, p. 291), on the other hand, describes it as "the least common of the three (snipe visiting Sarawak) but by no means rare". Earlier, in the Annual Reports of the Sarawak Museum, he gives the following figures for birds added to the reference collection.

1927	3 Fantail	2 Swinhoe's.
1928	2 Fantail	—
1929	1 Fantail	1 Swinhoe's.
1931	2 Fantail	2 Swinhoe's.
1932	—	1 Swinhoe's.
1935	3 Fantail	1 Swinhoe's.

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[1] This would seem to be the first official record from the Malay Peninsula—*vide* Robinson, 1909, p. 130.

His own snipe-shooting figures, with which he has kindly supplied me (*in litt.*) run as follows,

	Pintail	*Fantail*	*Swinhoe's*
1926–27	23	2	1
1927–28	48	1	2
1928–29	99	3	1
1931–32	21	2	1
Total for 4 seasons ..	191	8	5

Apparently in western Borneo Swinhoe's Snipe occurs irregularly and in small numbers, averaging out at one to every forty of the Pintail. It appears to be more numerous in the north. Robinson (1909, p. 130) refers to it as "numerous in Labuan and North Borneo during the winter months". Whitehead (quoted Bowdler Sharpe, 1890, p. 145) writes of it as "apparently the commonest Snipe in (?northern) Borneo, nearly all the Snipe shot in that island and Palawan being of this species".

The numbers in north Borneo would seem to be an extension from the Philippines, where it is again plentiful during the winter months. Bourns and Worcester (*MS*, quoted McGregor, 1909, p. 145, and Hachisuka 1931, p. 312) describe it as "extremely abundant in ricefields at certain seasons", while no comment is given on the other immigrant snipe recorded from the area. Delacour and Mayr (1946, p. 72) rate the relevent snipe found in the Philippines (excluding Palawan) as *C. stenura* rare, *C. megala* common, and *C. gallinago* uncommon.[1] It is the only *Capella* sp. listed from Celebes by Meyer and Wigglesworth (1898, pp. 789–791) and Stresemann (1936, p. 357) though the former authors express doubt of its distinctness from *C. stenura*. It is the only one of the three species under discussion given by Mayr (1941, p. 32) in his list of New Guinea birds. There are also a number of other records, by these and other authors, for additional areas in the Moluccas and the south-west Pacific zone. Bowdler Sharpe (1896, p. 626) mentions specimens in the British Museum collection from East Timor (3), Buru, Mysol and Amboina.

Capella gallinago (Linn.). Fantail Snipe.

This bird would appear to be even less plentiful than Swinhoe's Snipe in the southern part of the Malay Peninsula. Mr. Kempe records five, the same number as for *C. megala*, from a total of 1,360 snipe, but unfortunately he does not say where in Malaya he shot them. Dr. Molesworth, whose shooting has been confined to fairly low country, has not yet encountered it. Mr. Edgar, who must have seen well over 15,000 birds, taken mostly in Perak and the Dindings, with occasional visits to Province Wellesley and Kelantan, only encountered it once. This he describes as follows:—

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[1] Delacour repeats this valuation unchanged in his later work *Birds of Malaysia* (New York, 1947), and in its new context it is, of course, nonsense.

> "All the years that I shot in Sitiawan, I only once had Fantail. My notes are lost, but I remember that it was a year of very heavy flood inland, and I think it must have been 1926. A large number of birds came in, in a place where we did not normally expect to see many snipe; we drove them over a belt of rubber trees off some dug land on to a patch of wet thicket; they were all Fantail, much wilder and stronger on the wing than the usual Pintail, and very fine shooting. A party of three guns got about thirty, I remember. From then till now I have not seen a Fantail". (Edgar, *in litt.*).

Snipe have been heard by several observers on different occasions at Cameron's Highlands in the main range, and they are said to be common on the western sections of the Agricultural Station (altitude about 4,700 feet). A winged bird examined there by Mr. E. J. H. Berwick proved to be a Fantail (1947, p. 40). It is possible, as Mr. Edgar has suggested to me, that this species normally comes down the middle of the Peninsula in small numbers, and that in some years they are driven off their usual grounds by heavy floods inland. Alternatively, of course, it may be that the widespread climatic conditions which produce a season of heavy floods, induce a small number of these birds to travel further south than usual.

The Raffles Museum reference collection contains only six specimens from the Malay Peninsula, taken between 19 October and 1 April. It is possible that the three listed below as collector not known were actually taken by Seimund, as they bear Selangor Museum labels.

Date taken	Locality	Collector	Sex
19.10.11	Bagan Sĕrai, Perak	not known	♀
28.10.10	Bukit Gantang, Perak	not known	♂
22.12.12	K.L., Selangor	Native collector	2♀
1.1.12	Matang, near Taiping	not known	♀
1.4.?	Pudu, near K.L.	E. Seimund	♂

The British Museum collection contains a skin said to have been taken at Malacca by Davison in July, ?1878, (Bowdler Sharpe, 1896, p. 641). These localities are all on the west coast plain, but it must be appreciated that relatively few people shoot snipe in the hill country in Malaya. Riley (1938, p. 93) records two males taken at Bandon, Peninsular Siam, on 9 January, 1927, and quotes a specimen in the Hume collection, taken on the island of Junk Seylon (Salanga or Puket) on 18 February, 1878.

The frequency and distribution of this species in the areas to the north of the Malay Peninsula is very different from that of *C. megala*. It is plentiful and widely distributed over the greater part of India (Stuart Baker, 1929, pp. 259–261), Burma (Smythies, 1940, pp. 437–438), and French Indo-China (Delacour and Jabouille, 1931, pp. 164–165). In several of these regions it is said to arrive rather later than the Pintail, and to leave earlier.

In the Philippines it would seem to be much less plentiful than Swinhoe's Snipe, but more numerous than the Pintail[1]. In western Borneo the situation is reversed. Banks (1935, p. 290) records it as "nothing like so numerous as the Pintail, and going very much in spasms, some years none being obtained, at others quite a number though seldom more than one at a time". In the Annual Report of the Sarawak Museum for 1935 he notes that the reference collection contained 12 Fantail and 7 Swinhoe's Snipe, while his own shooting records for 1926–27 and 1930–31, quoted above, total 8 Fantail and 5 Swinhoe's, and give an average of one to approximately twenty-four Pintails.

The Fantail Snipe is not recorded from Celebes by Meyer and Wigglesworth (1898) or Stresemann (1936), or by Mayr (1941) from the New Guinea area. There are two unsexed specimens from Java in the Buitenzorg collection, shot near Batavia, (Bartels and Stresemann, 1929, p. 100), and a further one recorded in literature (Vorderman, 1884, pp. 242–244: quoted also Ciebers, 1926, p. 136). Vorderman, after detecting his example which was taken, presumably near Batavia, on 5 February, 1884, estimated that the Fantail was occurring in the proportion of one to every ± 600 Pintail, but as subsequent records show it is no more than a scarce vagrant in Java.

Robinson and Kloss include it in their list of Sumatran birds (1918, p. 266), but I can find no reference to a specimen taken on the island: it may possibly have been among the migrant Charadriiformes rather arbitrarily added to Vorderman's 1890 list by the authors on the grounds that they were known to occur on the east side of the Straits of Malacca. There is also a quite unacceptable record, from the Cocos-Keeling Islands (Wood-Jones, 1912, p. 345).

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[1] There is also a record, quoted by Mayr (1945, p. 44), for Micronesia (Saipan).

Capella stenura (Bp.). Pintail Snipe.

There is no question of the status of the Pintail Snipe in the Malay Peninsula, but a note on it here seems advisable, in view of the consideration given to the movements of the other two species in the adjacent areas.

This is the common snipe of the Peninsula, and in suitable localities it is sufficiently plentiful to provide first-class shooting. Probably the best accessible areas are on the coastal plains of Perak, Province Wellesley and Kedah. Robinson and Kloss (1910, p. 14) also found it exceptionally abundant in the rice-fields in both Langkawi and Trang. The birds normally begin to reach the northern Malay States during the latter part of August, and Singapore, in the south, by the middle of September. They appear first in small numbers, and do not usually become plentiful until the end of the latter month, Mr. A. T. Edgar noted the early arrivals in Perak from 1924–34, and found that his dates varied from 22 August to 5 September, Mr. E. Seimund considered that the birds normally reached Selangor about the beginning of September, but had early dates from 10–12 August. My earliest record for Singapore Island is 11 September. The birds usually return north in the second half of March or at the beginning of April, leaving rather earlier in a dry year. Mr. Edgar's dates for late birds range from 8 April to 5 May. (Data mostly from Chasen, 1936, pp. 169–170).

This bird, like the Fantail, is plentiful and widely distributed over the greater part of India and Burma during the winter months. Smythies (1940, p. 438) gives the first week in August (earliest date the 4th) for its arrival in northern Burma, and early in May (latest date the 21st) for its departure. It is very common in Siam from August to April (Riley, 1938, p. 93), and apparently more plentiful there than the Fantail Snipe (Aagaard, 1930, p. 210: Riley, 1938, p. 93). This also applies to French Indo-China (Delacour and Jabouille, 1931, p. 167).

The Pintail is undoubtedly the commenest snipe in western Borneo, but it would seem to be appreciably less numerous than in the Malay Peninsula. Moulton (1914, p. 138) describes a four days' bag of 193 head, obtained at Lundu, as large for Sarawak. Banks (1935, p. 250) writes,

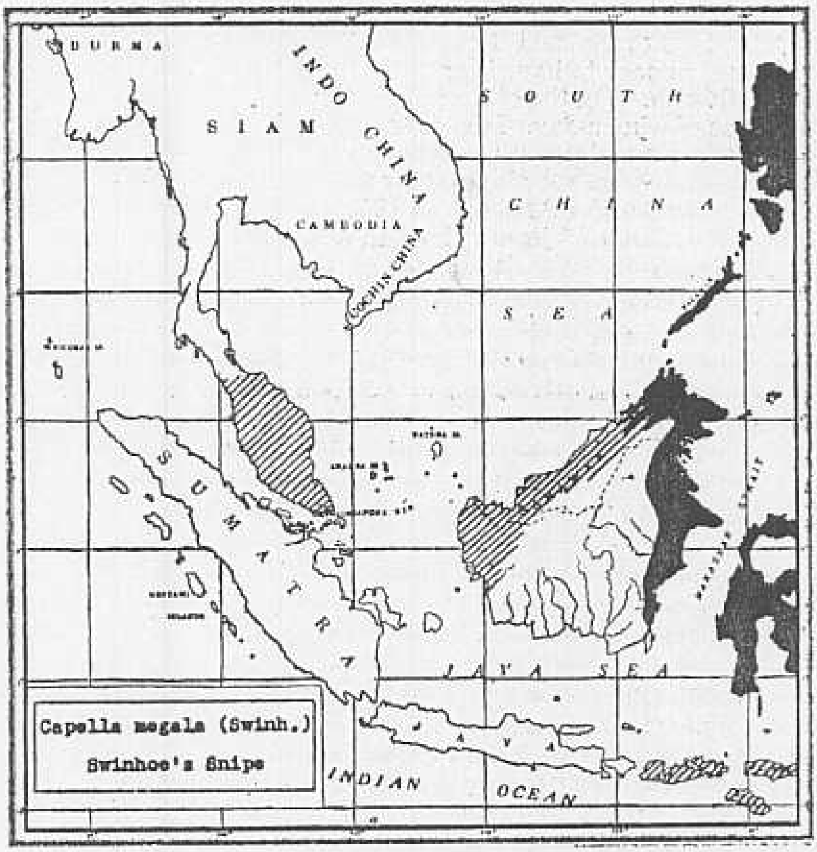
> "Big bags are not made in Sarawak and though enthusiasts often kill 50 couples in a season, a morning or evening shoot seldom runs into double figures for each gun ..... 186 is the best I have known in a season ....".

Elsewhere in this neighbourhood the Pintail would seem to be relatively scarce. Mayr (1946, p. 72) gives it as rare in the Philippines excluding Palawan, and includes it in the avifauna of Palawan without comment (ibid, p. 262). Whitehead (quoted Bowdler Sharpe, 1890, p. 145) notes that nearly all the snipe shot in North Borneo and Palawan were Swinhoe's. The Pintail does not appear to have been taken in Celebes, the Moluccas and New Guinea. On the other hand it has been recorded from Bali and the Karimon-Java Islands, and in Java and Sumatra would seem to have a status somewhat similar to that pertaining in the Malay Peninsula. A single stray was taken on Christmas Island (Indian Ocean) by Andrews in 1897 (Gibson-Hill, 1947, p. 161). Some indication of its numbers in suitable localities in Java is given by H. S. Banner's account,

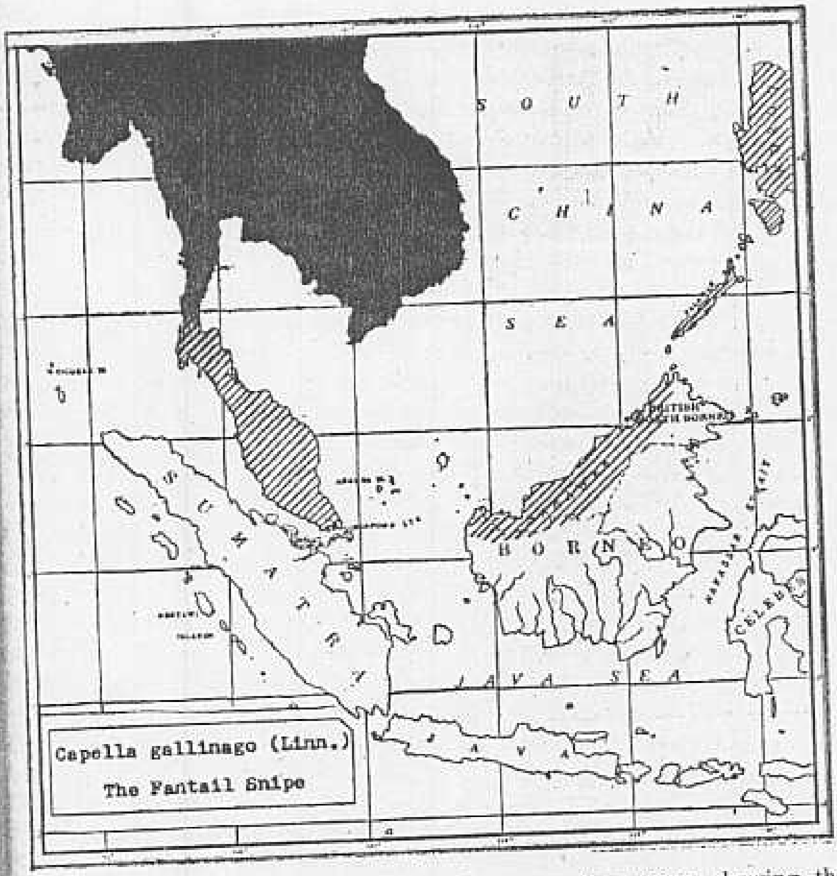
> "The sport most generally indulged in by the English community in Java is snipe-shooting, and very excellent it is .... a total of a hundred couple to four guns in a morning has often been reached. For after the first month or so of the rains the rice fields are literally alive with snipe, and there arise occasions when the man without an ejector gun will find himself unable to change his cartridges quickly enough to keep pace with the rise of the birds". (Banner, 1927, p. 190).

This makes an interesting comparison with that of Capt. Kelham, writing of snipe shooting in Province Wellesley, in the Malay Peninsula, in the eighteen-seventies,

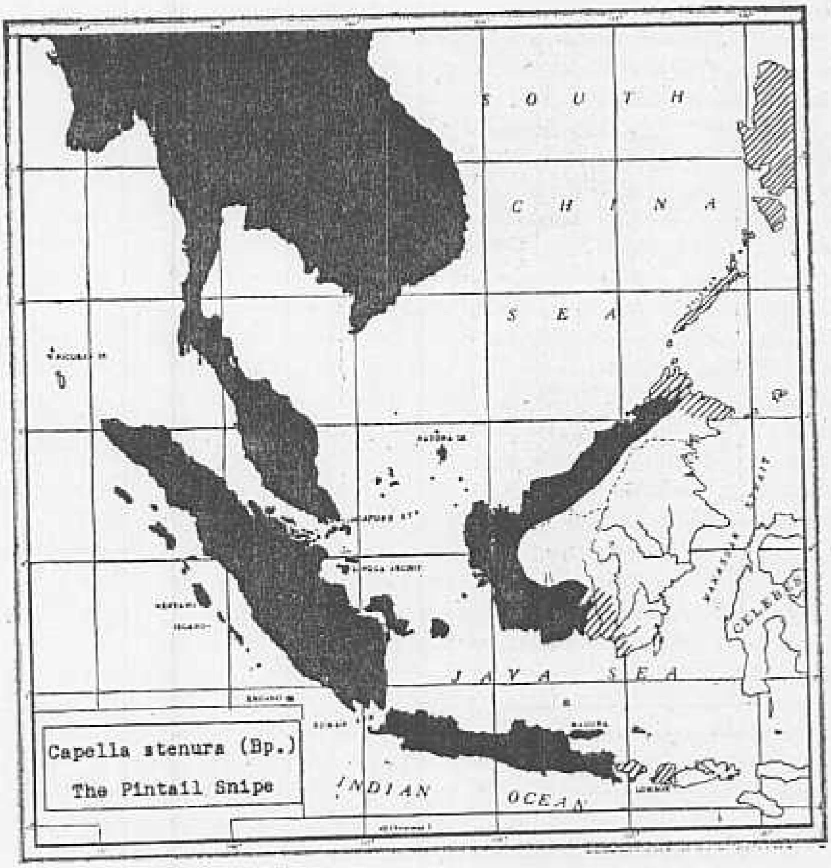
> ".... on the rough uncultivated land bordering these (padi-fields) the Snipe are extremely plentiful, enormous numbers often being shot in a day. One morning early in November, 1877, I bagged thirty-five couple by midday, and had quite as good sport on other occasions; but during the season of 1879, which was an exceptionally good one, the birds simply swarming, far larger bags were made, an officer of my regiment having bagged fifty-six couple to his own gun on one day, and fifty-four on another. But this represents good shooting; for it must not be imagined that the birds can be knocked down with a stick. Far from it, anything over twenty couple means really straight shooting and hard work, as the walking is bad and the heat intense". (Kelham, 1883, p. 183).



MAP 1. The Malay Peninsula and surrounding areas, showing the apparent distribution of Swinhoe's Snipe, *Capella megala* (Swinhoe), during the autumn and winter months. Areas within which it is plentiful in suitable localities are filled in with black; those within which it would seem to occur regularly but in much smaller numbers are marked with diagonal shading. Isolated records, seemingly attributable to strays, have been ignored.



Map 2. The Malay Peninsula and surrounding areas, showing the apparent distribution of the Fantail Snipe, *Capella gallinago* (Linn.), during the autumn and winter months. Areas within which it is plentiful in suitable localities are filled in with black; those within which it would seem to occur regularly but in much smaller numbers are marked with diagonal shading. Isolated records, apparently attributable to strays, have been ignored.



MAP 3. The Malay Peninsula and surrounding areas, showing the apparent distribution of the Pintail Snipe, *Capella stenura* (Bp.), during the autumn and winter months. Areas within which it is plentiful in suitable localities are filled in with black; those within which it would seem to occur regularly but in much smaller numbers are marked with diagonal shading. Isolated records, apparently attributable to strays, have been ignored.

Summary.

The basis of this paper is an examination of the relative numbers of the immigrant snipe of the genus *Capella* visiting the Malay Peninsula during the winter months. Both Swinhoe's Snipe, *Capella megala,* and the Fantail, *C. gallinago,* are undoubtedly much less plentiful in this area than the Pintail, *C. stenura.* A further consideration is given to their movements and relative distribution in the surrounding countries.

The main movement of Swinhoe's Snipe in autumn would seem to be through the Philippines south and east to the area round and including Celebes, the Moluccas and New Guinea. A small number of birds travel rather further west, and in the Malay Peninsula this species occurs with the Pintail in the proportion of about one to 250 of the latter. Further west still, in Burma and north-eastern India, it is apparently still scarcer, and probable accountable as no more than an occasional stray. In the remainder of the Malaysian sub-region it is only a rare vagrant.

The main movement of the Fantail Snipe appears to stop short at the southern limit of the body of the continent, where it is numerous and widely distributed during the winter months. A very much smaller number of birds, varying with the season but probably never so many as Swinhoe's in the majority of these areas, make their way further south over the Philippines, western Borneo and the Malay Peninsula. Elsewhere in the Malaysian sub-region it is merely a rare vagrant. It does not yet appear to have been recorded from the Austro-Oriental or Papuan sub-regions, further east.

The main movement of the Pintail Snipe would seem to cover the southern limit of the body of the continent, and to a large extent continue south over the Malay Peninsula to Sumatra, Java and western Borneo. In these areas, Siam and Indo-China it is the most plentiful of the immigrant snipe. It does not, however, appear to spread further east into the zone occupied by Swinhoe's Snipe. It is rare in the Philippines, and so far unknown from Celebes, the Moluccas and the New Guinea area.

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